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*The Bones of the Paschal Lamb.*—By JULIAN MORGENSTERN,  
Professor in Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati.

‘A bone in it ye shall not break.’<sup>1</sup> The Priestly legislation in Exod. 12 makes this provision for the Paschal lamb. Num. 9. 12 repeats the prescription. This paper will discuss the probable origin and significance of this rite.

Various hypotheses have been advanced, by Robertson Smith and others. None, however, has the slightest probability or is supported by valid evidence, other than that presented by Kohler.<sup>2</sup> Comparing the statement of John 19. 33-36, that none of the bones of Jesus were broken, with two modern instances, recorded by Curtiss, of the bones of the sacrifice remaining unbroken, and then citing several cases from comparative mythology of animals being eaten, but their bones being carefully preserved, flesh being then brought back upon them and the animal thus restored to life, Kohler has suggested that the prohibition of breaking the bones of the Paschal lamb points to the belief in its subsequent resurrection and reincarnation.

That this belief and practice are cherished by primitive peoples in all parts of the world, particularly those still living upon the hunting and fishing planes of civilization, is abundantly attested. Manifold evidence proves this belief and practice current in early Semitic life, particularly in the nomad state, and thereby confirms Kohler’s hypothesis.

The Testament of Abraham makes Sarah say,<sup>3</sup> ‘When you slaughtered the perfect calf and served up a meal to them (the three angels), the flesh having been eaten, the calf rose again and sucked its mother in joy.’ Kohler has compared this tradition with that of Ezra’s ass, recorded in Sura 2. 261, the bones of which, after having lain for one hundred years, were reclothed with flesh and restored to life. Damîri gives this tradition in full.<sup>4</sup> ‘When ‘Uzair was freed from Babylon he journeyed on

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<sup>1</sup> Exod. 12. 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Archiv f. Religionswissenschaft*, 13. 153f.; cf. JQR (old series), 5. 419.

<sup>3</sup> Recension A, 6 (ed. Barnes, 1892), 83.

<sup>4</sup> *Ḥayât al-Ḥayawân*, under *Al-Ḥimâr al-Aḥli*, near end of first half; translated by Jayakar, 1. 550f.

his ass. . . . He passed by a village in which he saw no person. . . . He said, "How will God revive this after its death?", out of wonder and not from any doubt of the resurrection. As-Suddi states that God revived 'Uzair and said to him, "Look at your ass; it is dead and its bones have become old and worn out." God next sent a wind which brought the bones of the ass from every plain and mountain whither the birds and beasts had carried them; they became united and joined with one another while he was looking on; it thus became an ass of bones without flesh or blood; the bones were then covered with flesh and blood, and it became an ass without life; an angel then came and blew into the nostril of the ass, upon which it rose up and brayed.'

Practically the same tradition, applied however to Jeremiah and his ass, is also recorded by Damîri.<sup>5</sup> The conclusion gives a slightly varying account of the reincarnation of the ass. 'When a hundred years had passed, God revived of Jeremiah his eyes, while the rest of his body remained dead; after that he revived his body while he was looking at it. Jeremiah then looked at his ass and found its bones lying separate and scattered, white and shining; he next heard a voice from heaven saying, "O ye old bones, God orders you to collect together," whereupon they united one with another and joined one with another. The voice was then heard to say, "God orders you to clothe yourselves with flesh and skin," which happened accordingly. Then the voice said, "God orders you to become alive," upon which the ass arose and brayed.'

A rather late Midrash<sup>6</sup> recounts the following narrative: 'They went a little further along the road. God appointed for them two stags. Moses said to the old man, "Go, fetch us one of the stags." The old man said to Moses, "Am I a fool that I should go to the stags? Is there anything swifter than the stag?" Moses said to him, "Take the staff in thy hand and point it towards them." He took the staff and showed it to them, and they were not able to move from their place. Immediately Moses took and slaughtered them and prepared a roast. Moses said to the old man, "Be careful not to break any of the bones." When they had eaten and drunk and put aside some of the

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ma'aseh 'al Dor Ha'asiri*, ed. Kraus, in *Haggoren*, 8. 22.

flesh, Moses placed bone to its bone. Then he took the staff and laid it upon them and prayed a complete prayer before his Maker. Thereupon God made the stags live and they stood upon their feet. Moses said to the old man, "I adjure thee by Him who revived the stags when they had neither flesh nor sinews," etc.'

Likewise one of the stories collected by Prym and Socin<sup>7</sup> tells that after the hero had been dead for ten years, his widely-scattered bones were collected by the wolves and sprinkled with the water of life by Sîmer, the great bird, that understood all the secrets of resurrection and eternal life, and he stood up once more as if from a sleep.

All these instances, and particularly those of the asses of Jeremiah and 'Uzair, remind us strongly of Ezekiel's vision of the valley of dry bones, which, at the word of God, came together, bone to its bone, and flesh came upon them and the spirit entered into them and they stood upon their feet alive.<sup>8</sup> Unquestionably the same conception of the possibility of restoration of life so long as the bones are preserved, underlies Ezekiel's vision, and proves conclusively the existence of this belief in ancient Israel. Certainly Ezekiel did not invent the picture nor was he the first to conceive the idea. Possibly the same thought is implied in Psalm 34. 21, 'He guardeth all his bones; not one of them is broken.' Certainly it is implied in the imprecation frequently applied in Rabbinic literature to such arch-enemies of Israel as Nebuchadnezzar, Titus and Hadrian, *s'hiq tamya*, 'May his bones be crushed,'<sup>9</sup> in other words, may he be denied all possibility of resurrection. Possibly we may also find here the explanation of the extreme care with which in ancient Israel the bones of the dead were guarded and given proper burial.<sup>10</sup> This would also explain why burning was the extreme punishment for crime,<sup>11</sup> and also why burning the bones of the dead,

<sup>7</sup> *Der neuaramäische Dialekt des Tur 'Abdin*, 1. 45; 2. 65.

<sup>8</sup> Ezek. 37.

<sup>9</sup> Jastrow, *Dictionary*, 539b.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. the stories of the burial of Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 50. 1-14, 25; Exod. 13. 19; Josh. 24. 32) and of Saul and his sons (1 Sam. 31. 13; 2 Sam. 21. 12-14).

<sup>11</sup> Lev. 20. 14; 21. 9; Josh. 7. 25. In this connection it may be noted that the Sadducees, who denied future life, carried out the penalty of burning literally, whereas the Pharisees, who believed in future life and would not deprive even a criminal of the hope of resurrection, poured molten

and thus depriving them of all possibility of resurrection, was the extreme of indignity,<sup>12</sup> and regarded by Yahwe as an unforgiveable crime.<sup>13</sup> At the bottom of all these practices lies the thought of the possibility of resurrection so long as the bones were preserved. There can be little doubt that among the early Semites this was a generally accepted belief, and that it continued to survive in a manner in ancient Israel until in the post-exilic period the developing conception of future life and reward and punishment in the hereafter gradually moulded it into the theological dogma of bodily resurrection.

A number of additional instances may be cited in which the prohibition of breaking the bones of the sacrificial animal occurs. Lane, commenting upon the peculiar '*aqîqah*-ceremony, says,<sup>14</sup> 'The person should say on slaying the victim, "O God, verily this '*aqîqah* is a ransom for my son, such a one; its blood for his blood and its flesh for his flesh and its bone for his bone and its skin for his skin and its hair for his hair. O God, make it a ransom for my son from hell-fire.'" A bone of the victim should not be broken.' Similarly Curtiss states,<sup>15</sup> 'In Nebk they offer sacrifice for a boy when seven days old, without breaking any bones, lest the child's bones also be broken.' Elsewhere<sup>16</sup> he describes a festival of the Ismaïliyah as follows, 'There is an annual festival at the shrine. They vow vows. All who desire go. They wash and put on clean clothes. They dance and sing. . . . The sacrifice must be male and a sheep, must be perfect, nothing broken, nothing wanting, must be at least a year old.' Likewise Hess<sup>17</sup> compares the Paschal lamb with the sacrifice offered by the 'Otäbe-tribe in honor of a member of the tribe on the seventh day after death. He says, 'On this day an old, toothless sheep or goat is sacrificed in order to avert evil. The relatives and all present eat the sacrifice. The bones may not

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lead down the throat in order to spare the body, or at least the bones (Mish. Sanhedrin 7. 2). Cf. also the tradition that just before his death Titus ordered his body burned and his ashes scattered, in order that God might not be able to restore him to life and judge him (B. Gittin 56b.).

<sup>12</sup> 2 Ki. 23. 14-20; Jer. 8. 1.

<sup>13</sup> Amos 2. 1.

<sup>14</sup> *Arabian Nights*, 4, note 24.

<sup>15</sup> *Primitive Semitic Religion of To-Day*, 178.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* 215.

<sup>17</sup> *Beduinisches zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, ZATW. 1915, 130.

be broken, but are laid whole in the grave, or, if this be too distant, are hidden under a stone, in order that the deceased may ride upon the animal.' In all these cases the intimate connection between the sacrificial animal and either the form which it will possess in its future state, or the person for whom it is the substitute sacrifice, is obvious.

Time does not permit detailed consideration of the interesting question of the origin of the sacrifice of the Paschal lamb. It suffices merely to state that it is generally agreed that the Paschal lamb evolved out of the even more primitive practice of firstling-sacrifices. The evidence is ample that the ancient Semites, particularly in the early stages of civilization, sacrificed all firstling animals and firstborn children in order to redeem the remainder of their group or species from the taboo, considered as naturally resting upon all members thereof, by virtue of the fact that they all belonged primarily and naturally to the deity that had created them. The underlying principle of such taboo-sacrifices was that the sacrifice of a part of the tabooed object, usually the first and best part, redeemed the remainder and rendered it fit for profane use. Correspondingly the taboo-sacrifices themselves were doubly taboo; hence were given over entirely to the deity, or in later stages of religious evolution, to his representatives, priests, men of god, poor, etc. Under no condition, in the early stages of the religion, might the sacrificer partake of his own taboo-sacrifice. Outwardly this was the feature of the taboo-sacrifice that distinguished it most positively from the covenant-sacrifice.

There is abundant evidence, the presentation of which here, however, lack of time forbids, that these taboo-sacrifices were conceived of as not actually, or at least not completely, dying. True, the flesh was consumed. But, particularly if the bones were preserved, the deity might easily create new flesh, and thus restore life. In the desert the animals thus sacrificed were neither eaten nor burned. Their carcasses were left lying where they fell, to be consumed by birds and beasts of prey. Burning represents a second stage in the evolution of the taboo-sacrifice. And in later Israel the thought still obtained that these firstling and firstborn sacrifices were not actually killed; they were made to merely 'pass through the fire.' In this process, true, the body, and probably too, even the bones were consumed. Yet none the

less, it was felt, the life itself was not extinguished, and could be made once more to re-enter the old frame or even a new frame of the same species.

The basis of this idea must naturally be sought in the earliest Semitic conception of the animal world. It would seem that, in common with so many other primitive peoples, the early Semites, dwelling upon the hunting or pastoral plane of civilization, conceived of the number of individual animals of each species as definitely limited. Hence their fundamental problem of existence was to maintain the number of these individual animals undiminished. Still today the nomad in the desert lives primarily from the milk products of his sheep and goats. And as still today, so too in ancient times, animals were killed only exceptionally, and generally, it would seem, with proper precaution, such as the preservation of the bones, to ensure eventual rebirth or reincarnation and the consequent maintenance of the original number of individual animals.

Here we have the explanation of that other prohibition, so frequently recorded in the Bible, of eating the blood. For the soul and the life were one; the soul was in the blood. To have eaten the blood would have meant to consume the soul, and this in turn would have meant the reduction of the number of individuals of the species by one. Ultimately the entire species might thus be made extinct. This was prevented by allowing the blood, with the soul, to flow upon the ground, whence the soul could easily at the proper moment enter its next body. This was greatly facilitated if the bones of some previous body were preserved and a frame were thus ready to hand. For this reason animals improperly killed or dying natural deaths, whose blood therefore had not been poured out, might not be eaten, lest the soul be consumed with the blood. This custom still persists among the modern Beduin. Musil writes,<sup>18</sup> 'The blood should not be eaten, because the soul, *nefs*, dwells in it. This would thereby pass into the eater. Likewise the flesh of animals that die natural deaths should not be eaten.' That this practice of letting the blood flow out upon the ground was in no wise sacrificial in character, as is so frequently claimed, is best evidenced by the fact that the procedure is prescribed for all animals, even such as could under no condition be sacrificed, such as the deer and

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<sup>18</sup> *Arabia Petraea*, 4. 150.

the antelope, and by the additional fact that although Deut. 12 strips the slaughtering of animals for food of its original sacrificial character, it still insists upon the pouring out of the blood.<sup>19</sup> The only possible explanation of the origin of this peculiar rite is that given above. It is corroborated by abundant evidence from the practice of other primitive peoples.

In this connection the etymology of the common Semitic word for 'blood,' דם, is illuminating. Barth<sup>20</sup> classes this among the common and original Semitic biliterals. Yet for many, if not most of these biliterals he admits the possibility of a triliteral, *tertia* "ו stem.<sup>21</sup> Granting the possibility of the relationship of the noun דם to the stem דמה, 'to be like,' it is more probable that the noun was derived from the verbal stem than vice versa. In other words this would imply that דם etymologically designates the blood as that which is like or, secondarily, contains the likeness of, the soul. This would, of course, indicate, what is quite probable, that the conception of the soul and the life as resident within, and in a sense identical with the blood, is a fundamental, primitive Semitic concept, and that, in general, ceremonies centering about the blood have also a certain relation to the thought of the soul and the life. Thus, for example, the blood of the Paschal lamb, smeared upon the doorposts of the houses of Israel, symbolized that the life of the lamb had been given as the substitute to redeem the lives of those within. Curtiss attests the general observance of this custom in Palestine still today.

Accordingly we need no longer doubt that the practice of not eating the blood, but instead, of carefully letting it flow forth upon the ground, had its origin in the aversion to eating the soul and thus reducing the number of the individual members of the particular species of animals. But the necessary corollary to this

<sup>19</sup> Also Deut. 15. 21-23.

<sup>20</sup> *Nominalbildung*, 2c.

<sup>21</sup> For a number of these words a considerably stronger case for a triliteral, *tertia* "ו stem can be made out than Barth presents. For example the parallelism of the Hebrew בן, Arabic أبى, to the stem בנה, and of the Aramaic בר, Assyrian *māru* (even though Delitzsch, HWB, 390, derives it from a stem כאר) to the corresponding stem ברא, is in all likelihood quite indicative. Similarly the relation of the common Semitic חם, 'father-in-law', to the stem חסה, 'to protect', would parallel the relation of its common synonym חתן, to the stem חתן, likewise 'to protect'.



belief is resurrection and reincarnation. And, as we have seen, this process was thought to be greatly facilitated by the preservation of the bones unbroken.<sup>22</sup>

This discussion may well shed light upon the otherwise rather obscure incident of the well-known account of creation from Berossus, that mankind was created out of earth mixed with the blood of a deity who had, at the command of Bel, sacrificed himself by cutting off his head for this purpose. In consequence thereof mankind possesses reason and divine understanding. The incident presumably by no means implies that the self-immolating deity permanently lost his life. Rather, in the light of our present investigation, it may be reasonably inferred that after the deity in question had thus benignly given his blood in order to call human life into existence, new, divine life was restored to his former bodily frame, still completely intact, and he lived once more. Meanwhile out of his blood, teeming with the germs of life and reason and understanding, mankind came into being. In other words, the story implies that human life is the direct continuation of the divine life originally resident in the blood of the self-immolating deity, just as it clearly states that human reason and understanding are the result of the divine reason and understanding likewise originally contained in the divine blood.

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<sup>22</sup> Among most primitive peoples the soul is conceived of as the inner image of the outer form of man or animal, as the case may be. It is localized in various parts of the body, in the heart (Frazer, *History of the Belief in Immortality*, 1. 267), the eye (*ibid.* 267), the breath (*ibid.* 129f.), and is frequently associated with the shadow (*ibid.* 130, 173, 245, 267), with the reflection in the water (*ibid.* 245), and even with the name (*ibid.* 195). It is certain that the Semites early associated the soul with the breath, as the Hebrew *nefeš*, *nešama* and *ruah* and their equivalents in other Semitic languages, indicate. Whether this identification be as primitive as that of the soul and the blood can not be determined with certainty.

That in ancient Israel the soul was occasionally conceived as dwelling in the eye, or at least as dwelling inside the body and visible to the outer world through the eye, may be inferred from the name, עֵינַן, 'the little man' (cf. Barth, *Nominalbildung*, 212 c), for the pupil of the eye. The term would hardly imply consciousness that the image seen in the pupil is actually the reflection of the form of the beholder, but can best be explained as the product of the popular conception that the soul looked out through the eye upon the world without, and thus was visible to others. However, this does not at all affect the general conception of the soul as residing in the blood.